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Brazil

Biotechnology

Biosafety Council Approves Two Biotech Corn Varieties

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Report Highlights:

On February 12, the National Biosafety Council (CNBS) gave the final approval for two varieties of biotech corn for commercial use in Brazil: Bayer CropScience's Liberty Link and Monsanto's MON 810.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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On February 12, the National Biosafety Council (CNBS) approved by 7-4 votes two biotech corn varieties:

- 1) Liberty Link corn (herbicide tolerant – ammonium glyphosate tolerant) from Bayer CropScience;
- 2) MON 810 (insect resistant – lepidopterus) from Monsanto

These two varieties along with another corn variety - Syngenta's insect resistant – were approved in 2007 by the National Biosafety Technical Commission – CTNBio. However, because of the joint position of the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Health in opposition to the release of these corn varieties the final decision was taken to the National Biosafety Council (CNBS) comprised of 11 cabinet ministers. Under the current legal framework established by Brazil's Biosafety Law 11,105/2005, CNBS is the highest institutional body to give a final decision to release biotech products for planting and sale.

During the voting process on February 12, besides the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health, two other cabinet ministers voted against the release of these biotech corn varieties: Fisheries and Agrarian Development. These four ministries of the Brazilian government are considered by Brazilian specialists as more susceptible to the influence of anti-biotech groups.

With CNBS approval, Bayer and Monsanto can now register their varieties at the Ministry of Agriculture and start planting these biotech seeds for multiplication. However, it is estimated that it will take up to two crop years before Brazilian farmers can begin to plant these corn varieties. Syngenta's biotech corn was left for the next meeting of the CNBS, which has yet to be scheduled.

There are also two other concerns reported by Brazilian biotech specialists: a possibility of another court injunction that could block the planting of the biotech varieties and the fact that there is an "unknown" amount of illegal seeds already in the market.

Post estimates Brazil's corn crop for the 2007/08 season at 53.5 million metric tons.